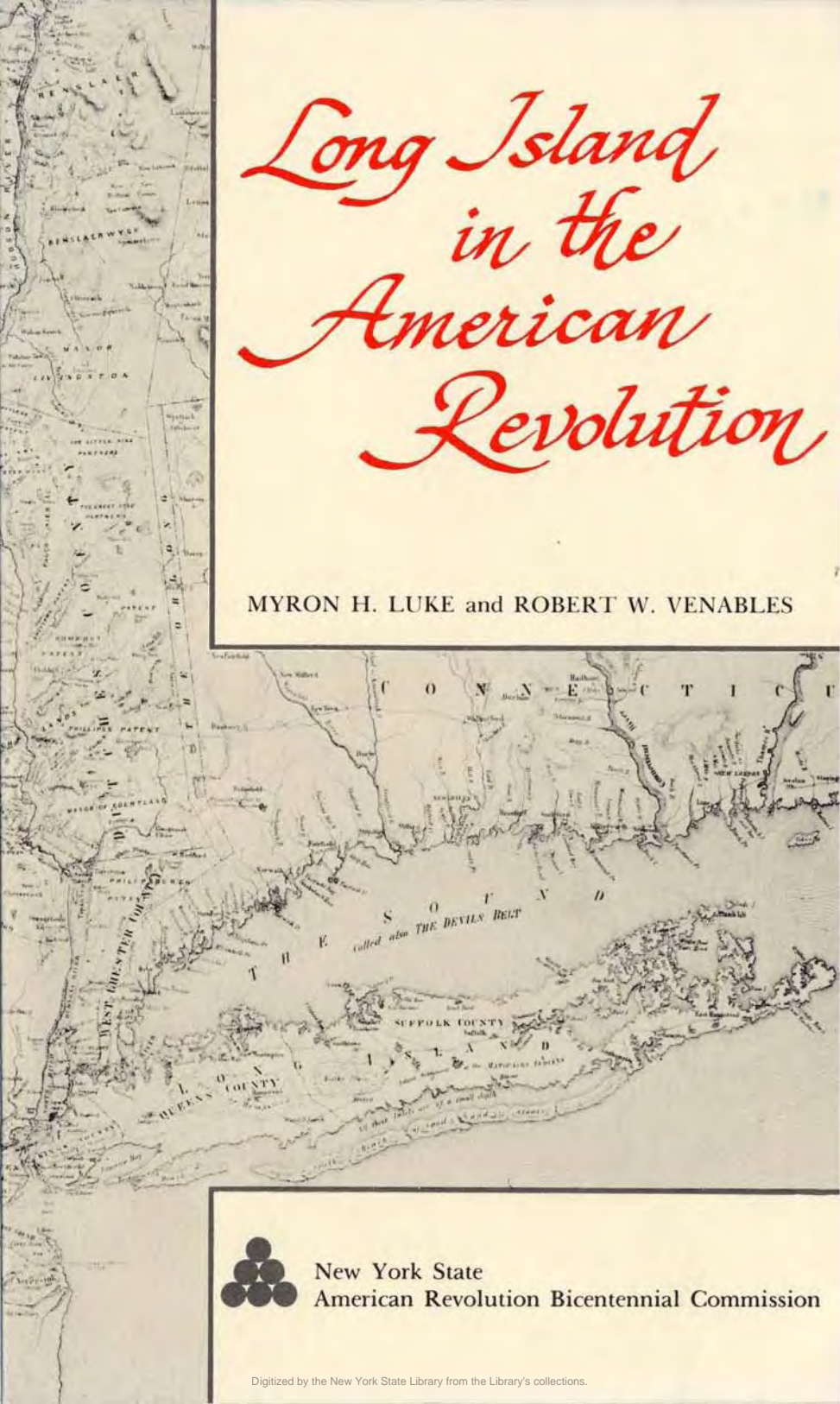


Long Island in the American Revolution

MYRON H. LUKE and ROBERT W. VENABLES



New York State
American Revolution Bicentennial Commission

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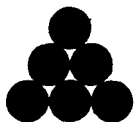
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Foreword

Few areas of the thirteen rebelling colonies escaped the severe effects of the Revolution. Nowhere were they felt more strongly than on Long Island. During the decade of political protest that preceded the declaration of American independence, Long Islanders were pulled and hauled between conflicting loyalties; neither the supporters of the crown nor the advocates of opposition to British colonial policies could establish a clear ascendancy on the island. Late in 1776, as the British tried to subdue their rebellious colonial subjects, one of the decisive battles for control of lower New York was fought on Long Island. For seven years thereafter, the island served as a main bastion of British strength in America, providing food, fuel, vehicles, and, sometimes, troops for the occupying army. When peace came in 1783, Long Island was one of the last British-held areas to be evacuated.

The story of Long Island's tortuous path through the war for independence is told in the pages that follow by professors Myron H. Luke and Robert W. Venables. They explain how the political loyalties of the island's inhabitants developed during the years of crisis leading up to the war and how Long Islanders reacted to the seven years of British occupation. It is a complex story, filled with excitement, tragedy, and suffering.

The Commission dedicates this booklet to the people of Long Island and to all Americans who are taking the opportunity during the bicentennial era to learn more of their Revolutionary past.

John H. G. Pell
Chairman

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The Stirrings of Protest

No taxation without representation! Oyster Bay's Sons of Liberty convened a meeting in February 1766 to protest a despised stamp tax passed the year before by the British Parliament. Supporting the stand of a congress representing eight colonies that had met in New York City during the fall of 1765, Oyster Bay's Sons of Liberty unanimously agreed that the Stamp Act was destructive of their constitutional rights as Englishmen. The stamp tax was meant to raise revenue, but it had not been passed by representatives in the colonial legislature. Instead, the act was the work of distant members of Parliament in whose election the voters of New York had no voice. The Oyster Bay Sons of Liberty decided that they would oppose the Stamp Act in every way possible, including a boycott of British goods, but at the same time they declared that they were protesting as loyal subjects of King George III, claiming it was Parliament that had erred.

So began the protests against British rule that would culminate in war, revolution, and independence for colonial America. Long Islanders, like all colonial Americans, would soon be forced to choose sides—to support either the British king and his efforts to bring order to his American empire, or to back the growing rebellion against British domination. Nowhere would the choice be harder to make than on Long Island.

Long Island stretches nearly 130 miles along the American coast. In 1612 the Dutch explorer, Adrian Block, learned that the great land mass to the east of Manhattan was an island, pop-

ulated by Indians the explorers were soon calling "Alagonquins." Permanent European settlement began in 1636 when Hollanders and French Huguenots sent over by the West India Company built farms and trading posts on the island's western tip.

As the Dutch were establishing themselves along the Hudson River from Staten Island to Fort Orange (Albany), English colonists from New England crossed the sound from Connecticut to settle on the island's eastern reaches and along its northern shore. Much of Long Island thus followed a social, political, and religious development more akin to Puritan New England than to the Dutch society of the Hudson. Even after the English seized New Netherland in 1664 and created the province of New York, many Long Islanders felt themselves to be more a part of Connecticut, just across the sound to the north, than of the Anglo-Dutch society of the Hudson. Historically, Long Island's development was influenced from two directions; from the Hudson society to the west, where the colony's political and commercial life was focused, and from New England, which exerted a powerful cultural, religious, and social pull on the island. In time, these sometimes conflicting influences would be important determinants in the response of Long Islanders to the great controversies of the 1760s and 1770s.

Governor Thomas Dongan and the first elected Assembly in New York established three counties on Long Island in the 1680s. Kings, at the western end, was closest to the lower Hudson and most under the economic and political influence of New York City. Next came Queens, approximately thirty miles long west to east; then Suffolk, encompassing nearly two-thirds of the entire island. Each county was divided into towns. At the time of the Revolution, the towns in Kings County were Flatbush, Brooklyn, New Utrecht, Gravesand, and Flatlands; in Queens County, Hempstead, Jamaica, Flushing, Newtown, and Oyster Bay; in Suffolk County, Southold, Southampton, East Hampton, Shelter Island, Brookhaven, Huntington, Smithtown, and Islip. Much of the agitation and protest of the revolutionary era would be centered in these towns.

In the wake of the Stamp Act controversy of 1765 and 1766, many sore points developed in the relations between the English king and his American subjects. Lord Townshend's effort to im-

pose a variety of commercial duties in 1767 provoked new outbursts of protest and opposition throughout the colonies and produced a united nonimportation agreement against British goods. New Yorkers also worried about the small professional army quartered in New York City, supported in part by colonial taxes. In January 1770 serious fighting between soldiers and civilians occurred on Nassau Street and Golden Hill. Could these same troops, some colonists asked, soon become an instrument of political intimidation? Some thought that question had been answered a few months later on March 5 when soldiers in Boston fired into a crowd of hecklers, killing five of them.

Gradually the strongest and most vocal opponents of parliamentary measures (called Whigs) were developing an effective structure to organize and control their activities. During the years since the Stamp Act protests, communications were established between protest groups throughout each of the colonies. Local committees worked with county committees, which worked with provincial committees. Soon, these so-called committees of correspondence were communicating with similar committees in other colonies. Opponents of British measures were beginning to articulate a Whig position understood by colonists everywhere—on Long Island, in Boston, or in Virginia. When Parliament decided to enforce its right to rule not only the empire's transatlantic and international affairs but the internal business of its North American colonies as well, the committees became the focal point of a political organization that would attempt to take political control of the colonies until England could be made to define the specific roles which she and the colonies would each fulfill in governing the empire. Thus, in September 1774 when Whig representatives from twelve colonies met in Philadelphia as the First Continental Congress, the network of communication and friendship that would soon transform protest into rebellion was growing rapidly.

Whig Versus Tory

The Continental Congress had met to protest British imperial policy. In Boston, radicals had dumped a shipment of tea into the bay, provoking England into closing the port of Boston, reorganizing the Massachusetts government, and sending General Thomas Gage and an army to govern the colony. New York sent eight delegates to the First Continental Congress. One of them, Simon Boerum of King's County, had been elected in a most unusual manner. According to Pennsylvania delegate Joseph Galloway, Boerum and a friend declared themselves to be the King's County Committee of Correspondence, and then the two men unanimously elected Boerum to be the King's County delegate.

Boerum's election reveals how little enthusiasm there was for extreme measures on the western end of Long Island. Most colonists had hoped that it was possible to protest England's imperial measures without sacrificing loyalty to the crown or support for the regular colonial governments. As tensions mounted, however, it became increasingly difficult to hold to this position, particularly as the ever more confident committees began to demand that people declare themselves openly for one side or the other. As events would soon show, many Long Island residents were prepared to resist being pushed into an extreme position, one from which there might be no retreat.

On October 20, 1774, the delegates at the Continental Congress passed an embargo on British goods that was to become effective on December 1. To insure compliance, colonists were to

sign an "association," or pledge, promising that they would adhere to the embargo. The Continental Congress further ordered that "a committee be chosen in every county, city, and town . . . whose business it shall be attentively to observe the conduct of all persons touching this association." Committees were, in effect, encouraged to intimidate those who resisted the association. More than any other action to date, the association agreements forced people to begin to make clear distinctions between Whigs who supported the protest, now sometimes calling themselves "patriots," and their opponents, increasingly called loyalists, or Tories.

On Long Island, the strongest support for the embargo came from Suffolk County, where on November 15 Suffolk's local committees of correspondence met at the County Hall at Riverhead, recommended that a subscription be undertaken to aid the distressed poor in the beleaguered city of Boston, and urged the enforcement of the Continental Congress's act of embargo. At the western end of the island, opinion was sharply divided. Supporters of the Continental Congress met at a Jamaica town meeting on December 6 and approved the acts passed in Philadelphia. A committee of correspondence and observation was chosen to enforce adherence to the patriot dictates, but those in attendance emphasized that their actions were protests against the recent acts of Parliament, not a general rebellion, and they approved a resolution proclaiming Jamaica's allegiance to King George III and Parliament. Such statements of loyalty to Britain were still, in fact, common to the Whig protests throughout the English colonies.

Six weeks later the Jamaica committee congratulated the eight delegates from New York who had served in the Continental Congress. This brought a reply from opponents of Congress in Jamaica. They signed a declaration, published in a New York newspaper, that they had never supported the Jamaica committee or the cause of the Continental Congress. The signers represented a clear majority of the freeholders of Jamaica, numbering 91 out of a total of 160. The declaration made it clear that most of the Jamaica freeholders were against any effort to supplant the established provincial government by stating that "we do not recognize any other Representatives but the General Assembly of this Province by whose wisdom and interposition we



Bedford Corners in 1776

From Peter Ross's A History of Long Island, Volume 1 (1902).

hope to obtain the wished redress of our grievances in a constitutional way."

At Newtown, Oyster Bay, Flushing, and Hempstead, similar divisions emerged during the latter part of 1774 and in the new year. Passions were heated as Whigs attempted to enforce the association pledging support for the embargo, and opponents ignored or resisted it. In November 1774, the Whigs dissolved their colony-wide "Committee of Fifty-one," which had directed the protest thus far, and organized a "committee of observation" of sixty with the authority to provide for the selection of delegates to a second continental congress to meet in Philadelphia in May. Accordingly, on March 16, 1775, the committee of observation called upon the county committees to elect and send deputies to a provincial convention to be held on April 20 in New York where delegates to the new congress would be chosen.

The strong political division on the island once again emerged during the voting for convention delegates, as the eastern end of the island reflected its strong economic, political, and social ties with New England and the western end demonstrated its frequently more conservative inclinations. Suffolk County Whigs, meeting at Riverhead, chose their deputies unanimously. In Kings County, the town of Flatlands refused to participate, maintaining neutrality but announcing it would not contest the decision reached by the towns of Flatbush, Brooklyn, New Utrecht, and Gravesand. In Queens, the election of convention delegates was left to individual town meetings. The town meeting at Jamaica decided by a vote of ninety-four to eighty-eight not to send any delegates. At Oyster Bay, anti-Whig sympathies were even stronger, as that meeting also refused to send any delegates to participate in the convention by an overwhelming vote of 205 to 42.

In both Jamaica and Oyster Bay, the Whig minority subsequently held rump sessions and elected delegates anyway. Newtown and Flushing elected convention delegates, but at Hempstead, instead of voting for delegates, opponents of the convention succeeded in passing a resolution against the Whig position, declaring that the people of Hempstead were "averse to all mobs, riots, and illegal proceedings, by which the lives, peace and property of our fellow-subjects are endangered; and

that we will, to the utmost of our power, support our legal magistrates in suppressing all riots, and preserving the peace of our liege sovereign," George III. When the province-wide Whig convention met in New York City, the delegates requested that their four colleagues from Queens refrain from voting because of the widespread dissension in their county, although they were to be permitted to participate in debates. The Queens delegation agreed. After two days of meetings that organized further support of the policies of the Continental Congress, the convention adjourned.

The very next day, Sunday, April 23, a dispatch rider galloped into the city bringing the alarming news that armed conflict had broken out four days earlier at the Massachusetts farm villages of Lexington and Concord. Radical agitators such as Isaac Sears and John Lamb led anti-British parades with drums and flags through New York City streets. Ships loaded with military supplies meant for British troops at Boston were boarded and the supplies taken. Whigs broke into the armory room at City Hall and carried away guns and powder.

When the issue of Britain's imperial policies passed from the debating chamber to the battlefield in Massachusetts, total war was not necessarily inevitable. Many colonists believed that further bloodshed could be avoided through negotiations. If war did occur, however, Long Island lay long and vulnerable. It was close to New England's political turmoil, close to New York City, second largest city in the colonies, and rich in food staples and timber. If an all-out war was born of the crisis in Massachusetts, it was sure to come eventually to Long Island.

To meet the new challenge, the Whigs organized a "Provincial Congress," which would convene on May 22 and take over the duties of the defunct Provincial Assembly, New York's official legislature. The Provincial Assembly had held its last meeting on April 3 and could not reconvene because of Whig political pressure. On April 29, six or seven thousand people gathered in New York and were addressed by Isaac Low, a moderate Whig merchant (who would later become a loyalist). Low urged the people to sign the document now called the "General Association." Signers of the document agreed to "associate under all the ties of religion, honor and love to our country to adopt . . . whatever measures may be recommended by the Con-

tinental Congress or resolved upon by this Provincial Congress for the purpose of preserving our constitution."

On Long Island delegates to the new Provincial Congress were chosen amid the same dissension that had characterized island politics before news of Lexington and Concord. Suffolk and Kings counties managed to elect delegates without directly confronting those who were opposed. But the situation in Queens revealed how complex and confused the situation was on much of Long Island, and how willing the Whigs were to resort to almost any maneuver to give their actions the appearance of legitimacy.

When the delegates from the towns in Queens met to select the county's representatives to the Provincial Congress, Thomas Hicks of Hempstead announced that he had been sent by his neighbors to say that Hempstead wanted no part in the proceedings and did not wish to be represented in the congress. But the rest of the delegates in the meeting ignored Hempstead's wishes, and then, in a move calculated to appease those who opposed sending representatives to congress, elected Hicks as one of the county's delegates! Still Hicks demurred; and he and another representative, Joseph French of Jamaica, believed that the majority of the freeholders in their districts were opposed to the congress. Both men refused to take their seats.

Still New York's Whigs refused to quit. When the Provincial Congress convened, the delegates discussed the problem in Queens. Despite the strong opposition to the Provincial Congress in the county, the delegates declared the election of Hicks and French to be valid and announced that Queens was legally represented whether the two men attended sessions or not. Thus, any decision made by the congress would be as binding upon Queens as on any other county in the province.

The Provincial Congress then began an attempt to impose Whig conformity upon the whole of New York. On May 26 it ordered that all its members sign the General Association. Three days later, on May 29, the Provincial Congress recommended that counties appoint committees and subcommittees in any area where they were lacking. These local committees were to press the association upon every individual in their locale. The names of any who refused to sign the association and support the Whig cause were to be transmitted to the Provincial Congress by July 15.

Even in Suffolk County, where Whig support was strongest, there was reluctance to signing and opposition to enforcing the association on Long Island. In Brookhaven, for instance, congressional supporters formed a committee of observation on June 8 and explained that no committee had existed previously "not for want of patriotic spirit, but because opposition ran so high in some parts of this town, which arose, we verily believe, from want of better information." With Brookhaven Whigs now organized into a committee to watch over their fellow citizens, Suffolk's patriot committee structure was complete; the business of getting signatures on the association could go forward. When all of the committees in the county had finished their work, only 236 freeholders had refused to sign. Their names were promptly sent to the Provincial Congress. Given the situation in Whig-dominated Suffolk, it is hardly surprising that the committees in Kings and Queens had great difficulty in persuading individuals to sign the association. Opponents were so numerous that little effort was made to record their names.

During the summer of 1775, it became apparent that the conflict of arms between Great Britain and the colonies would continue indefinitely. Thus in mid-September, New York's Provincial Congress imposed a penalty upon those who refused to sign the association: "all such arms as are fit for the use of the troops raised in this colony, which shall be found in the hands of any person who has not signed the General Association, shall be impressed for the use of such troops." This measure served the dual purpose of meeting the patriots' need for weapons and at the same time disarming loyalists who might rise in armed reaction to the patriot cause. Those deprived of their weapons by this act were given certificates that promised payment for the weapons if they were not returned. Logically, those who were penalized were exempt from being called up into the militia, which at that time was under patriot control. However, any persons resisting the confiscation of their weapons were to be arrested. Militia units from Suffolk County were moved into Queens to make sure the decree was carried out.

When Suffolk's patriot militia marched into Queens, the loyalists hid their weapons, gave lame excuses to their zealous patriot neighbors, and occasionally resorted to threats of their own. One Whig reported that "the people [of Queens] conceal

all their arms that are of any value; many declare that they know nothing about the Congress, nor do they care anything for the orders of Congress, and say that they would sooner or later lose their lives than give up their arms; and that they would blow out any man's brains who would attempt to take them." The same observer added that it would have taken a battalion of militia to collect the loyalists' weapons, to which loyalist Richard Hewlett of Hempstead, who had raised his own fully armed company, retorted: "Had your battalion appeared, we would have warmed their sides."

In the meantime, the patriots went about organizing militia units across the island. One quarter of the militia were to be designated "minutemen," so-called because they were ready to turn out immediately. In Suffolk, the response to recruitment was enthusiastic, once again reflecting the influence of New England on the eastern end of the island: But in Kings and Queens, loyalist opposition combined with apathy and uncertainty to make patriot recruiting difficult. By the middle of 1776, scarcely a third of the eligible men in Queens had been enlisted to meet the recruitment quota of 1,770.

The Crisis Deepens

Long Island was torn by dissension and conflict as the revolutionary crisis deepened. The conflict with the mother country exacerbated deep internal divisions that extended into the very marrow of Long Island society. Nowhere was this process more visible than in the Town of Hempstead, which spanned the island from sound to ocean.

The great Hempstead plain, some five miles wide and located in the center of the township, was more than just a natural boundary separating the northern part of the town from the south. North of the plain, the area had developed along lines paralleling southern Connecticut: Long Islanders here shared with Connecticut residents a similar religious development and a mixed maritime and agricultural economy. Ties to New England were strengthened by bonds of blood and marriage that extended across the sound. South of Hempstead plain, residents were primarily Anglicans, and the basically agricultural economy was characterized by larger, more prosperous landholdings than existed in the north. Soon these built-in differences would shape the course of revolutionary politics in Hempstead.

Most of the Whigs in the town of Hempstead lived in the north. It was there that most of the signatures on the association were obtained. But northern Whigs were outnumbered in town politics by the strong anti-Whig majority in the south. This majority had delegated Thomas Hicks to oppose the calling of the Provincial Congress, and loyalism in the south was so strong that Richard Hewlett organized a unit of armed

crown supporters. Almost never could the Whigs of the north dominate town politics.

Thus, on September 23, 1775, after the bitterness and hostility engendered by the association movement, northern Whigs met and resolved "that during the present controversy, or so long as their [the dominant Hempstead loyalists'] general conduct is inimical to freedom, we be no longer considered as a part of the township of Hempstead than is consistent with peace, liberty and safety; therefore in all matters relative to the Congressional plan, we shall consider ourselves as an entire, separate and independent beat or district." On October 12, 1775, the New York Provincial Congress approved the secessionists' selection of a committee and a list of militia officers. After the war, on April 6, 1784, the New York legislature officially divided the original town into North and South Hempstead.

In New York harbor on October 13, 1775, Governor William Tryon boarded the warship *Dutchess of Gordon*, taking with him most of his official records. Threatened by patriot agitators and unable to govern because the patriots' Provincial Congress had taken over the colony's legislative functions, Tryon was convinced that only armed intervention by British troops could restore legitimate authority to New York. With Tryon, the last major symbol of crown authority in New York, in political limbo at anchor in New York harbor, the Provincial Congress called for new elections in the hopes of strengthening its position. In Queens, a countywide vote was to be held for five days beginning on Tuesday, November 7. More than 1,000 voters turned out. The ballot was simple: residents were to vote either for or against a slate of committed patriots running for the Queens delegation to the Provincial Congress. Ballots were cast openly, and every voter's name and decision was taken down for the record—a secret ballot in the eighteenth century was considered the handmaiden of conspiracy, not freedom. When the polls closed and the votes were counted, the loyalists had won. The slate of delegates to the Provincial Congress had been defeated by an overwhelming vote of 788 to 221. At the end of the month, the loyalist Richard Hewlett of Hempstead received supplies of small arms, powder and shot, and a cannon, complete with a gunner sent ashore by the British warship *Asia*. Now Hewlett was better able to train his company of militia sworn to support

King George III. In Queens, the patriot cause was clearly in eclipse.

Because the balloting had been open, the Provincial Congress knew the names of all 788 Queens voters who had rejected the patriot delegation, and it officially declared them to be guilty of a breach of the association—the pledge to support the patriot cause, which so many loyalists had earlier refused to sign. They were further labeled as being in contempt of congress, a label which no doubt pleased them. The Provincial Congress additionally declared that all 788 were to be deprived of its protection, and since it was the only functioning government at the time, this meant that the loyalists were outside of the law. All communications between them and other inhabitants in the province were to be cut off. Their names were to be published in the newspapers, and a list of the more important loyalist dissidents was to be forwarded to the congress by the Queens County committee.

The New York Provincial Congress then asked the Continental Congress at Philadelphia for help against the loyalists on Long Island, and that body responded quickly. On January 3, 1776, Colonel Nathaniel Heard of New Jersey was ordered to proceed to Long Island with several hundred minutemen and three hundred soldiers of the Continental line. They were authorized to disarm all those who were recorded on the list as having voted against sending delegates to the Provincial Congress. Loyalist leaders were to be arrested and brought to Philadelphia for questioning. All loyalists who were on the list were deprived of their civil rights; all trade and contact with them was prohibited; they were forbidden to travel without permission; and no lawyer was allowed either to prosecute or defend them.

Colonel Heard and his troops swept through Queens, searching loyalist homes for weapons. A substantial number of loyalists gave up their arms voluntarily; others had to be threatened. Thoroughly intimidated, the loyalists offered no armed resistance. A few slipped away into hiding, prepared to fight at a more advantageous time. Of the 788 who had voted against the sending of patriot delegates, 471 eventually signed a deposition promising obedience to Whig rule and swearing never to take up arms for the king or to aid the British in any other way. The

majority of the 26 loyalists singled out as most influential were arrested. Some were taken to Philadelphia for questioning and then sent to New York for a brief imprisonment. A New York City newspaper reported that, at the conclusion of Colonel Heard's foray into Queens, nearly 1,000 loyalists had given up their weapons. Loyalist protest against the actions of Colonel Heard found their most lasting expression in a song sung to the melody of the long-popular "Yankee Doodle:"

Col. Heard has come to town,
In all his pride and glory;
And when he dies he'll go to H—l
For robbing of the Tory.

Col. Heard has come to town
A thinking for to plunder;
Before he'd done, he had to run—
He heard the cannon thunder.

And when he came to Hempstead Town
He heard the cannon rattle,—
Poor Colonel Heard he ran away
And dared not face the battle.

And now he's gone to Oyster Bay
Quick for to cross the water;
He dare no more in Hempstead stay
For fear of meeting with a slaughter.

The brave words were not matched by action.

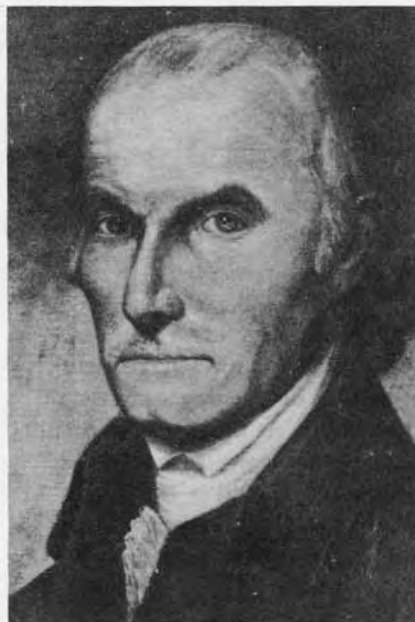
During the summer of 1776, the patriots of New York were busy attempting to organize a strong province-wide government that would more effectively cope with the dissension and crisis that was tearing New York apart politically. At the center of the problem was the difficulty in deciding exactly what powers the patriots could assume over the long term. Could a legitimate government be established that would carry out patriot directives, pass necessary laws to keep the province functioning, and still leave open the door to a future accommodation with Britain? Under the confused circumstances, would a declaration of



Francis Lewis



Philip Livingston



William Floyd

Three of the four New Yorkers who signed the Declaration of Independence had close connections with Long Island. The painting of Lewis is by Albert Rosenthal, reproduced courtesy of Independence National Historical Park; the portrait of Livingston is by Charles Willson Peale, reproduced courtesy of the Berkshire Museum; the portrait of Floyd is by Edward L. Henry after a painting by Ralph Earle, reproduced courtesy of Independence National Historical Park.

independence for New York become the necessary alternative to continued chaos? Similar issues were being debated on a continental scale in Philadelphia by the Second Continental Congress meeting there. The New York delegates in Philadelphia had been specifically instructed not to vote for independence until the Provincial Congress approved such action. Thus the New York delegation abstained from the vote in Philadelphia on July 2 when the Second Continental Congress voted independence for the thirteen United States of America. They also did not participate in the July 4 vote that approved an official statement on national liberty—the Declaration of Independence. New York delegates did not sign the Declaration of Independence until the New York Provincial Congress notified them that independence had been approved by that body on July 9.

Of the four New York delegates who did eventually sign the declaration, three had important ties to Long Island. Francis Lewis was a merchant who had retired to Whitestone where he became active in patriot politics. When the British later invaded Long Island, his home was burned and his wife was imprisoned. Another signer, Philip Livingston, had, in addition to his townhouse on Manhattan, a beautiful mansion at Brooklyn Heights. William Floyd, born in Brookhaven, had an extensive Long Island estate. When the British invaded Long Island, his family fled to Connecticut.

New York's Provincial Congress endorsed the Declaration of Independence on July 9. That same day, George Washington, who was in New York City preparing its defense against possible British invasion, had the declaration read to his army. A copy of the declaration was also sent to all county committees so that it could be publicized. At Huntington, where the declaration was read on July 22, it was "approved and applauded by the animated shouts of the people who were present from all the distant quarters of this district." Ceremonies at a liberty pole and an evening dinner capped the celebration. All over the island, however, no "animated shouts" of support came from the thousands of loyalists who realized that only a British invasion would rescue them from the upstart government that claimed to rule a newly independent nation.

Following the vote approving independence on July 9, the New York Provincial Congress voted unanimously on July 10

that "the style or title of this House be changed from that of the Provincial Congress of the Colony of New York to that of the Convention of the Representatives of the State of New York." With the state's "Convention," as the newly independent state government was called, now functioning under the assertion that it had full legal authority independent of the British, New York prepared for a British attack.

There was no doubt that war would soon reach Long Island.

The Battle of Long Island

In midsummer 1776, lower New York was preparing to receive the brunt of the British effort to reimpose crown control in America. Units of the British army had been landed by warships on Staten Island on July 2. Kings County, because of its proximity to New York City, was already a vast armed camp of patriot soldiers. A fortified line had been constructed across the western tip of the county from Wallabout Bay to Gowanus Bay. Troops surveyed the coastline to sound the alarm when the invasion came and to do what they could to prevent the loyalists from communicating with any British ship lying offshore. When patriot forces discovered any boats owned by loyalists that could be used to convey messages, supplies, or troops, they either confiscated their sails and oars or dismantled the entire craft. Alarm signals of pitch, wood, or other combustibles had long since been posted at intervals along the shore: fire at night or columns of smoke by day would warn of the British approach.

One of the patriots' major dilemmas was what to do with an estimated 100,000 head of cattle and like number of sheep that grazed the meadows of the island. Especially large numbers of animals were on the pastures of Kings County and at the eastern end of the island at Montauk, which had already been harassed by British landing parties. Whigs knew that the herds could not be allowed to fall into British hands. In July 1776, the New York Convention ordered that the stock in Suffolk, Queens, and Kings be driven away from the coasts and herded to various points inland. Only animals necessary for family use were to be

left on farms near the coast. If necessary, animals would be destroyed. When the feared British invasion finally came in August, an all-out effort was made to move the cattle beyond the enemy's reach. There were not enough soldiers to herd such vast numbers of animals quickly, but Brigadier General Nathaniel Woodhull, a Long Islander in charge of the operation, was doing what he could. He and his men had driven 1,400 cattle onto the Hempstead plain by August 28. On that day British light dragoons suddenly appeared a short distance from Jamaica at an inn Woodhull was using as a headquarters. In the ensuing fight, Woodhull was badly wounded on the head and arms. Taken prisoner, he did not receive adequate medical treatment and he later died from infected wounds.

Woodhull's cattle drivers had been attacked and defeated on the eastern fringe of a mighty campaign that both sides knew might end the entire war. The origins of the drama had begun long before, in October 1775, when the British government evaluated the position of 7,000 British troops besieged by the Continental army around Boston. The British decided that an army of only 7,000 was insufficient to suppress the American rebellion, a point further emphasized when that army was forced to evacuate Boston in March 1776. When the British army entered its next major campaign in the north, its forces would be overwhelming. Its target was New York City, Long Island, and the lower Hudson River Valley.

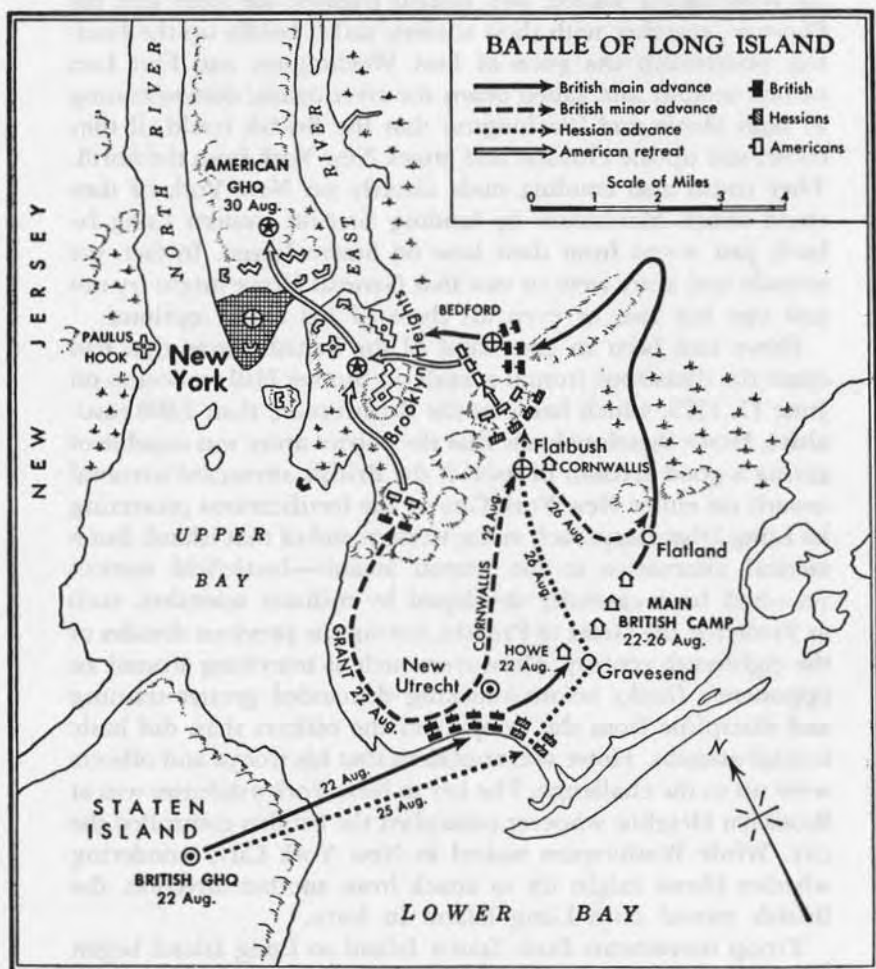
The British campaign began modestly with the arrival of three British warships in lower New York Bay on June 25, 1776. On board one of the vessels was General Sir William Howe. He had faced the patriots in Boston and was now ashore at Staten Island, carefully planning how he would go about defeating his patriot counterpart defending New York, George Washington. A July 14 offer to take a first step toward peaceful negotiations was rejected by Washington. By the third week in August, Howe's invasion force had swollen to become the largest expeditionary force Great Britain had ever launched against any foe in Britain's history: 32,000 troops, including German mercenaries, and a fleet manned by 10,000 seamen commanded by the general's brother, Lord Richard Howe. The gigantic army joined their commander on Staten Island while the fleet—ten ships of the line, twenty frigates, and hundreds of transports—lay in

the waters south of New York City. Howe's forces symbolized a Britannia that did indeed rule the waves and was now about to go after a ragged army of 19,000 patriots.

Washington's 19,000 were drawn from all over the colonies. As Washington waited, two British frigates, the *Rose* and the *Phoenix*, together with their tenders, sailed boldly up the Hudson underneath the guns of Fort Washington and Fort Lee, turned around and sailed down the river again, demonstrating to both Howe and Washington that the British could, if they chose, sail up the Hudson and attack New York from the north. They could also conduct raids directly on New York or they could attack Manhattan by landing first on western Long Island, just across from their base on Staten Island. In fact, the armada and army were so vast that General Howe might try not just one but two or even all three of his major options.

Howe had been in command of the British forces that had made the disastrous frontal assault on Bunker Hill in Boston on June 17, 1775, which had cost the British more than 1,000 casualties. Howe therefore knew that the patriot army was capable of giving a good account of itself if the British attempted a frontal assault on either New York City or the fortifications protecting its Long Island approach at the western end of that island. But a tactical alternative to the frontal assault—battlefield maneuver—had been carefully developed by military scientists, such as Frederick the Great of Prussia, during the previous decades of the eighteenth century. Maneuvers such as marching around an opponent's flanks before attacking demanded greater training and discipline from the troops and the officers than did basic frontal assaults. Howe was confident that his troops and officers were up to the challenge. The key to New York's defenses was at Brooklyn Heights; whoever controlled the heights controlled the city. While Washington waited in New York City, wondering whether Howe might try to attack from another direction, the British moved onto Long Island in force.

Troop movements from Staten Island to Long Island began on August 22, 1776, as thousands of troops were ferried across The Narrows. The British secured a beachhead without American resistance, for the patriots were depending upon their fortifications farther north to stop the assault. On August 23 there were some sharp skirmishes, but Howe was being deliberate,



From Encyclopedia of American History, Richard Morris, editor, Harper and Brothers, 1953. Copyright, 1953, Harper and Brothers.

massing his forces, and the patriots could do nothing but wait to see where Howe would strike.

Washington's defenses on Long Island were centered at Brooklyn, where a series of fortifications defended the East River and others ran from Wallabout Bay southwest to Gowanus Bay. The land approach to these fortifications was protected by troops stationed at points along a ridge to the south known as the Heights of Guian (or Guan). The Heights of Guian ran from a point in the west near Gowanus Bay eastward toward Jamaica, and varied in elevation from forty to eighty feet above the plain directly to the south of them. The Guian Heights were choked with trees and thickets, making it impossible for an army and its equipment to break through quickly. However, at the western end there was a passage between the ridge and the waters of Gowanus Bay. This passage had a road running straight through it toward Brooklyn Heights and the patriots' major fortifications. Over a mile and a half to the east of this was Flatbush Pass. A mile east of Flatbush Pass was Bedford Pass, and some three miles east of Bedford Pass was Jamaica Pass. Thus there were four passages through the Heights of Guian, like gates in an otherwise impenetrable wall. Around midnight on August 26-27, some of the 550 patriots guarding the westernmost passage near Gowanus Bay fired on some British soldiers foraging in a watermelon patch. The foragers beat a hasty retreat. Shortly after three o'clock in the morning, a full moon appeared. And out beyond the watermelon patch, marching unseen through the countryside toward 550 patriots, were 5,000 British troops.

Those 5,000 were under the command of General James Grant, who, as a member of Parliament, had addressed his colleagues on February 2, 1775, before the outbreak of hostilities at Lexington and Concord, declaring "that the Americans would not fight, and that he would undertake to march from one end of the continent to the other with 5,000 men." He was about to try to prove his boast on Long Island, and shortly after midnight a few hundred of his advance guard struck the patriot lines. Grant's 5,000 were moving north parallel to another 5,000, primarily Germans, who were headed in the direction of Flatbush Pass and Bedford Pass. When the sun rose on the morning of August 27 with "a red and angry glare," Washington's troops



The retreat of the American troops under General Stirling across Gowanus Creek during the battle of Long Island. Engraving after a painting by Alonzo Chappel. From A History of Long Island, Volume I (1902), by Peter Ross.

were already locked in combat with these advancing British forces. But Washington was still not sure whether a major attack might be mounted against the city from another direction, so he remained on Manhattan. Where was Howe and the rest of that huge army?

Far to the east, just south of Jamaica Pass, five very unhappy patriot officers—the only force on guard at that strategic but remote point—discovered the answer shortly before that full moon had come into view at 3:15 a.m. Howe and 10,000 troops were headed through Jamiaca Pass! Unfortunately, the hapless five had already been captured by Howe's advance units before they could warn the rebel army. The British and Hessian soldiers poured through the pass and wheeled westward. Thus far, Howe's tactic of battlefield maneuver was working brilliantly. By eight in the morning he and his 10,000 were *behind* the approximately 2,500 patriot defenders of the other three passages. Howe's presence was finally discovered by 400 patriot riflemen, but it was too late. At nine o'clock Howe fired two cannons as a signal to his troops on the south side of the ridge that he was behind the patriot lines. By eleven in the morning, Howe was within two miles of the main Continental bastions on Brooklyn Heights.

Patriot soldiers along the Heights of Guian tried to defend their positions, were defeated, and then had to fight their way through or past Howe's encircling army. Hundreds on the American right, cut off from a land retreat, had to wade across eighty yards of Gowanus Creek, much of the time under enemy fire, to escape their desperate position. By two in the afternoon, patriot resistance between the Heights of Guian and Brooklyn Heights had crumbled. Washington, who had crossed over from Manhattan about 8 a.m., was saved from total defeat only because winds and then an ebb tide prevented the British fleet from sailing northward along the East River and blasting the patriot army at Brooklyn Heights from the rear. Even so, the day had been disastrous for Washington's forces. During the battle the American commander in chief had watched 250 Maryland troops under General William Alexander (who claimed the title earl of Stirling and was called Lord Stirling) fight a rear-guard action until they were eventually overrun. Washington was so moved by their courage he was reported to have said,

“Good God! What brave fellows I must this day lose!”

The next day could have been worse. But the winds that had favored Washington's army on the 27th of August continued to blow and so the fleet was still unable to bombard the patriots. Howe's army settled in to dig siege trenches towards Washington's Brooklyn Heights position. Howe's troops, flushed with victory, had wanted to storm the patriot bastions, but Howe saw no reason to sacrifice the lives of his men in a frontal assault; he was counting on forcing Washington into submission by siege. After the British erected a redoubt on the American left flank, only six hundred yards separated the two armies. That afternoon a cold rain began falling. The already demoralized American army of ten or twelve thousand hunkered down and waited. By August 29, Washington knew he had to get his army off Long Island and back to Manhattan. During the day he had ordered that boats be gathered at the Brooklyn ferry. At one o'clock in the morning on August 30, he calmly supervised his men as unit by unit they were rowed or sailed across the East River to Manhattan. Two Massachusetts amphibious regiments, John Glover's from Marblehead and Colonel Hutchinson's from Salem, used all their seamens' skills and the difficult operation went smoothly. British scouts soon became suspicious of the quiet in the American lines; a few crept forward into the patriots' outerworks shortly after four in the morning. Washington and some last defenders were still on Long Island. They would be caught if the British realized quickly enough that Washington was attempting a complete withdrawal and that there were virtually no troops in the American fortifications. Luckily a fog rolled in masking the departure of the last boats, one of which carried Washington.

Howe won his victory by brilliant maneuver and Washington extricated himself as well as could be expected—better, perhaps—by an equally stunning maneuver; both generals had shifted the position of about 10,000 men in the secrecy of night. Howe had the good fortune to be guided by three Flatbush loyalists who knew the countryside, giving him an advantage over the patriot generals who were unfamiliar with that same terrain. Washington had some courageous soldiers and officers who fought on even when the first day of battle turned against them, and he had the luck of the weather: a wind that

kept the British fleet from bombarding his troops and a fog that covered his escape. The battle for Long Island had established a format for the rest of the war. The British would often succeed in their first maneuvers only to be outfoxed sooner or later by patriot countermeasures that prevented an overwhelming British victory.

Of some 10,000 patriots engaged in the battle of Long Island, more than 200 (perhaps as many as 312) were killed, while at least 1,100 were wounded, captured, or missing. Of the 22,000 British and German troops engaged, only 63 were killed and about 314 were wounded, captured, or missing. Ironically, the greatest losses suffered by either side in the campaign had occurred before a shot was fired: about eight percent of the British force had died on the voyage across the Atlantic.

Long Island itself soon became occupied territory, as British cavalry units swept ahead of the main army to secure towns and hamlets from one end of the island to the other. While the island would be occupied by the British for the rest of the war, its people would not be passive. Because the war was, after all, a revolution, the British occupation should be seen as General Howe saw it: a return of legitimate law and government which would protect its loyal citizens. Now it would be Long Island's place to help His Majesty's government return stability to the rest of the colonies. Thus the island was transformed into a British staging area for future battles, the first being to dislodge Washington's army from Manhattan.

As Howe's victory on Long Island had proven, the loyalists had played and would continue to play an important role in encouraging British victory. More important, within two months, the future battleground in Long Island's Revolutionary history came permanently into focus. While Long Island's land would support the British armies with food, forage, timber, and other supplies, her battleground would be her waterways: inlets, the Atlantic, the East River, and Long Island Sound. In fact, although the land of Long Island fell to the British quickly during the invasion of 1776, the surrounding waters were contested throughout the war.

At first, the waters off Long Island were important primarily as highways to the next battle. When General Howe's brother, Admiral Lord Richard Howe, failed to end hostilities by nego-



Detail from "A Chorographical Map of the Province of New York..." by Claude Joseph Sauthier, printed in London, January 1, 1779. Photo courtesy of the New York State Library, Albany.

tiations held with patriot representatives Benjamin Franklin, John Adams, and Edward Rutledge on Staten Island, September 11, 1776, the Howe brothers renewed their campaign. On September 15, five British warships on the East River bombarded Continental positions at Kip's Bay on Manhattan. Across the river near the mouth of Newtown Creek, 4,000 British and Hessian soldiers were massed on the Long Island shore. Boarding eighty-four flatboats, they swarmed across the river. When they scrambled ashore on Manhattan, there were no patriots to resist them—the British warships' shelling had driven them back from their positions.

Further inland on Manhattan, Washington could not rally his panic-stricken troops. In the meantime, more British forces were landing at Inclineburg (Murray Hill), a mile northwest of Kip's Bay. Patriot troops in New York City escaped to the north and regrouped at Harlem Heights, leaving America's second largest city to the British. Nearly a month later, on October 12, 1776, eighty vessels carried most of General Howe's troops up the East River through Hell Gate to Throg's Neck on the mainland. Howe was determined to outflank Washington, who was still entrenched at Harlem Heights on Manhattan, and then attack from the east and north. Howe's advance units attempted to force their way inland, but were bottled up by a few patriot defenders.

On October 18, Sir Henry Clinton was ordered to reembark some of the troops and set off three miles eastward into Long Island Sound to establish another mainland beachhead at Pell's Point. That very day, Washington's main army was withdrawing from Manhattan and heading toward White Plains. Clinton hoped that his force could lead the way in trapping Washington's extended column of retreating soldiers and pin them against the Hudson River. But Clinton's army of 4,000, primarily Hessians, ran into 750 patriots commanded by Colonel John Glover. Most of Glover's troops were Marblehead, Massachusetts fishermen and seamen, the same sailors who had played a major role in ferrying Washington's defeated army from Long Island during the foggy early morning hours of August 30. Glover's skirmishers delayed a British advance guard, and then the rest of the patriots, entrenched behind stone walls and trees, stopped Clinton's main attacks. Washington's army escaped in

the meantime, and that night Glover's men marched away.

Clinton's expedition was the first of many that in subsequent months and years would use Long Island Sound to mount attacks on the Americans. For the patriots, on the other hand, Long Island's waterways, especially the sound, would become a guerrilla highway and battleground, as soldiers would cross the sound from bases in New England to raid British and loyalist bases on the island. Thus water, not land, would be the key to Long Island's military role for the rest of the war.

The patriot stand at the battle of Pell's Point brought an end to one phase of the British campaign, which had begun with Howe's landing on Long Island in August. Washington had miraculously escaped defeat not once but several times during that summer and fall of 1776; Pell's Point was only the most recent occasion. During that phase of the 1776 campaign, maneuvers on land had usually ended in British victories. But the maneuvers over water, while they rarely resulted in British defeats, continually had the effect of postponing British hopes of achieving a final, overwhelming victory. On October 18, almost seven weeks after Washington crossed the East River from Long Island, he and his army fled from Manhattan Island. Howe and Clinton had tried to trap him by using the East River and Long Island Sound, but they failed. The waterborne maneuvers around Long Island during the crucial year of 1776 provide an insight into how naval maneuvers were to be an important factor during the entire war. The British, who supposedly ruled the waves, could not use their naval skills to clinch a total victory. In fact, the last major defeat of their war in America would be an exact reverse of what Washington had accomplished on August 30, 1776, when he successfully slipped his army across the East River and off Long Island. Five years later, General Lord Charles Cornwallis would not have the good fortune to escape the York Peninsula at Yorktown.

Long Island's Ordeal Begins

The American defeat on Long Island left most of the patriot population there ill-prepared for what was to follow. Rumors were rife. There was particular concern that Suffolk was about to be invaded. Some of the militia units that had been raised in Suffolk marched home, but then disbanded on the advice of their officers; other soldiers, such as those who served in Colonel Josiah Smith's regiment, crossed the East River to await developments and new orders. A number of the militia crossed the sound and joined New England troops. The Oyster Bay Committee of Safety was in session when the news of the defeat came; they broke up at once and hastened home.

Many patriots feared that severe penalties would be imposed by the British upon those who had been active in committee work and similar activities. Certainly those who had signed the association and had urged it on others could not expect to be treated sympathetically by the enemy. Rather than face the anticipated punishment, many families crossed the sound to Connecticut.

Immediately after the battle, the New York Convention recommended that the inhabitants of the island—at the convention's expense—send as many as possible of their women, children, and slaves, along with grain and livestock, over to Connecticut. Various port facilities along the sound were used, and it was reported that the wharves at Sag Harbor were jammed with refugees. As many as 5,000—about one out of every six Long Island inhabitants—fled, leaving behind their homes,

their farms, their businesses, and many of their personal possessions. Most of them would be gone for seven years; Long Island was now enemy territory.

Circumstances were quite different for the loyalists who could now come out of hiding to welcome the smartly disciplined cavalry and infantry of their king. The loyalists, wearing red cockades in their hats or red ribbons down their backs, reaffirmed their support for the crown and freely offered goods, food, and money to their liberators. Most loyalists logically assumed that the British victory on Long Island would soon cause a collapse of the opposition to king and parliament. British power on sea and land seemed so tremendous that few could conceive how the army of the Continental Congress could hold out. Flushed with enthusiasm, the loyalists turned on their previous tormentors, the local patriots, with a vengeance. Working with British authorities, loyalists were quick to identify the most vociferous patriots still remaining on the island. Those taken into custody generally had been truly active in the patriot cause, but occasionally a complaint from a loyalist that a person's mere presence in a community was dangerous to the king's interests was a sufficient reason for arrest.

With Washington's forces in retreat, the British acted quickly to restore order on Long Island and elsewhere in occupied territory. General Sir William Tryon, the royal governor of New York who earlier had been forced to flee, now returned with the Howes to reestablish the king's authority, ordering "that all [patriot] Committees meet as soon as possible for the purpose of revoking all their proceedings under Congress, and dissolving their unlawful Associations." In October, a petition signed by 614 Suffolk County residents was sent to the Howe brothers. The petition affirmed allegiance to the king, as did a similar petition signed by 1,182 men from Queens County and a November petition from Kings County.

In the meantime, Governor Tryon was busy obtaining the depositions of various Whig committees in Suffolk County, including the county committee and the local committees of Brookhaven, Huntington, Smithtown, Southold, and East Hampton. The depositions declared that each committee had ceased its work, had dissolved its organization, and now asked for the protection of George III. Committee members as well as

others took the oath, the one at Huntington being typical: "I do swear upon the evangelist of Almighty God, that I hold true and faithful allegiance to his Majesty, King George the Third of Great Britain, his heirs and successors; and hold an utter abhorrence of congresses rebellions etc., and do promise never to be concerned in any manner with his Majesty's rebellious subjects in America. So help me God!"

In a letter to Lord George Germain in December 1776, Governor Tryon said he had given certificates to nearly 3,000 men who had signed the oath. Even two high-ranking militia officers of Suffolk, leaders in the formation of patriot forces, had been pressured into taking the oath. Threats of property confiscation and imprisonment made Tryon's job easier, but even such tactics were not sufficient in some cases, particularly along the north shore. Some of those who resisted or who were suspected of secretly aiding the patriot cause were arrested and jailed on prison ships in New York harbor.

After the battle of Long Island, a substantial effort was made to recruit loyalists into Britain's military effort. Occasionally, entire units of militia organized by the patriots would be persuaded to take the oath of allegiance and serve a new cause, the king's. Other loyalist militia had begun to organize themselves even before the invasion. The loyalist militia's primary duty was to stand watch along the north shore of the island to prevent surprise attacks from New England and to hamper smugglers and spies.

Some groups of loyalists were recruited into the regular army. Known as the provincial corps, these units were under the command of Oliver De Lancey, a member of an old and distinguished New York family. De Lancey was appointed brigadier general of one loyalist corps in September 1776 and served on Long Island for the rest of the war. He was to command a brigade of 1,500 men in three battalions of 500 each, but the real strength of this unit never matched its stipulated strength, numbering only 707 in 1778. The energy of the De Lancey family in organizing and leading this brigade was not limited to Oliver. His son-in-law John Harris Cruger and his eldest son Stephen De Lancey were the second in command of the first and second battalions respectively. Oliver De Lancey personally commanded the first battalion; George Brewerton of Manhattan commanded the

second; and Gabriel Ludlow of Queens County commanded the third. Ludlow's second in command was Hempstead's tenacious Richard Hewlett. Once organized, the loyalists believed that their units would be used solely for the defense of Long Island, but British needs in Georgia eventually drew off the first and second battalions. Only the third, consisting primarily of Queens County men, remained on the island throughout the war.

Recruitment of loyalists throughout America fell far short of what England had hoped, but it was particularly disappointing in strongly loyalist areas such as Long Island. General Howe complained that while loyalists by the thousands sought protection behind British lines relatively few offered their services, even after Howe offered 200 acres for every noncommissioned officer and 50 acres for each private who enlisted. In 1778, newspaper invitations were extended to "gentlemen volunteers" to serve in Captain Kinlock's Light Dragoons or "in that respectable regiment called the Prince of Wales' Royal American Volunteers" or "with the brave fellows belonging to the Queen's Rangers." Volunteers, the advertisements said, will "receive every encouragement of bounty, pay, clothing, and all other necessities to form the complete soldier." And if one was already in the service, or preferred not to be, a reward could still be obtained by persuading others to join.

Loyalist and regular units were stationed in various towns and places on Long Island. De Lancey's three battalions spent the winter of 1776-1777 in Oyster Bay, Huntington, and Brookhaven respectively. The 16th and 17th Light Horse Dragoons wintered at Hempstead in 1777 and 1778. There was a Hessian encampment in Kings County, and others were stationed at Norwich, Jericho, Westbury, and Cedar Swamp for most of the war. German troops also frequently camped at Wolverhollow. British regulars were stationed at Southampton and East Hampton, and also manned a fort at Sag Harbor. Although British strength on the island fluctuated, the following partial breakdown for February 1779 gives some idea of the numbers and their locations:

- 700 Grenadiers at Jamaica
- 700 Light Infantry at Southampton
- 300 Light Infantry at Bedford
- 750 Highlanders at Bedford

- 350 Hessian Chasseurs at Flushing
- 350 Hereditary Prince (Hessian) at Brooklyn
- 350 Prince Charles (Hessian) at Brooklyn
- 150 Ludlow's Battalion at Lloyd's Neck
- 300 17th Dragoons, probably at Hempstead
- 250 Simcoe's Rangers, exact location unknown
- 50 New Levies, exact location unknown

General Washington's undercover agents often reported an even wider dispersion of troops. In addition to the locations mentioned above, they observed units at Setauket, Brookhaven, Canoe Place, Coram, Musketo Cove (Glen Cove), Hempstead, East Hampton, Whitestone, Huntington, Jericho, and Sag Harbor. Some of the Provincial, British, and Hessian units reported by the spies at various places were the German Huzzars, Skinner's Brigade, the 17th Dragoons, Fanning's Regiment, the Welsh Fusiliers, the Volunteers of Ireland, Buskeard's Regiment, the German Jaegers, Queens Rangers, De Lancey's Brigade, Lord Cathcart's Legion, the Duke of Athol's Regiment (Scottish), Governor Brown's Regiment, the 54th Regiment, Colden's Volunteers, Lord Rawdon's Corps, the Highlanders, and the Prince of Wales American Regiment.

The orderly book of De Lancey's loyalist brigade refers to many more units than are cited above, sometimes with locations given, sometimes with only a mention of the name. Seventy-five foot regiments are included as well as seven additional Hessian regiments and seven companies of artillery. Not all were on the island at the same time, but a sizeable force was always present. A rough estimate of the total number of loyalist, British, and Hessian troops in 1779 on Long Island was 8,500, not including militia. This formidable array was due in part to the ever-present threat of invasion from Connecticut and Rhode Island across the sound.

Since space was limited on transports, the British did not bring from England all the equipment they needed. Thus all kinds of vehicles and draft animals, necessary to move the tremendous amounts of supplies for the army, had to be acquired in America. Dependable island loyalists were commissioned to see to it that wagons, horses, oxen, and other needed equipment were supplied to the army. Food and firewood were also in heavy demand. Early in September 1776, for example, General

Howe notified the people of Suffolk that if they wished to demonstrate their loyalty they should send 200 wagons to help move the army's baggage from New Utrecht to Hellgate. Over 300 were sent: at least in the beginning of the war, loyalists seemed more willing to enlist their property in the cause of their king than serve as soldiers.

Throughout the war, a continuous record was kept of what was available on Long Island farms: the number of horses a farmer owned, the quantity of light or heavy wagons, and similar statistics of property. Generally, it was British practice to recruit a farmer or his sons or hired men to drive that particular farmer's animals and vehicles, for animals and equipment might otherwise be worn out by careless handling. Many farmers in fact wanted to go with their teams and wagons in order to safeguard their property. Cash was sometimes offered as compensation for services, but usually farmers received certificates promising future payment.



William Alexander, who claimed an English title as earl of Stirling, was an American commander during the battle of Long Island. Portrait by John Wollaston in the collection of the New-York Historical Society. Reproduced courtesy of the society.

British requirements for grain and hay were met in similar ways. A directive from the British Commissary of Forage on September 27, 1776, within a month after the battle of Long Island, ordered the Justices of the Peace "to summon the farmers of their Districts to attend at some central place, to demand of each, what grain or straw he can spare As to hay we must have the whole for which you will give them the proper Certificates for me to pay them by."

The fields of patriots who had left their homes were cultivated "for the King's use" by people appointed to the task. British collectors moved through farm settlements gathering necessary supplies, Captain John Smith of De Lancey's First Battalion telling his men that they were "to take into your custody all the grain, forage, and creatures you can find on L.I., being the property of persons actually in rebellion, or who have deserted their habitations." Suffolk County residents received the following form with the specifics filled in, according to demands, by the Commissary of Forage: "You are hereby ordered to preserve for the King's use_____ of hay_____ bushels of wheat_____ of oats _____ of rye_____ of barley, of Indian corn and all your wheat and straw, and not to dispense of the same, but to my order in writing, as you will answer the contrary at your peril."

As can be imagined, the food requirements in 1776 for an army of 32,000 men were enormous. Meat was particularly needed, and the numerous herds on the island were logical attractions to the British commissary. Cattle that had been driven eastward by the patriots, away from the British, were recovered almost immediately. A notice was sent to any loyalist whose cattle may have been taken in the cattle drive to come and identify his animals and either reclaim them or, in case they were needed immediately, receive certificates of future payment. But many cattle were taken without compensation, and Judge Thomas Jones, a loyalist and member of the Supreme Court, was one of those extremely critical of the British on this point. Jones himself had suffered sizeable losses, and he accused the officers in the commissary department of being corrupt in the handling of civilian property.

The British use of one Long Island product literally changed the landscape: wood for fuel and construction was a commodity for which the British had a voracious appetite. Acres of stumps

replaced luxuriant stands of trees. Farmers were notified how much wood they would be expected to deliver at which designated location and were warned of the severe penalties that would be meted out if the quotas set for them were not met. Work gangs of woodcutters went out day after day, year after year, leveling areas of the great primeval forests that still existed on the island at such places as Lloyd's Neck. If other wood was not available from forests or woodlots, orchards were cut down.

Cords of wood and stacks of building timber had to be transported to locations along the Atlantic, Long Island Sound, or the East River. Coastal sloops and schooners carried the wood to New York City or other destinations. Certificates drawn on the Office of Forage in New York City served as payment. Some British officers manipulated the wood supply records to make it appear they had paid for more wood than they actually had, pocketing the difference when they were reimbursed by the crown.

Petty thefts by British soldiers, raids by patriot expeditions, and the crimes of outlaws plagued Long Island farmers throughout the war. Extra precautions were taken on many farms where rooms in the house became nighttime pens for animals and fowl. Long Islanders also ran the risk of having their homes entered by authorized military parties searching for supplies. On at least one occasion, the trustees of the Town of Huntington petitioned Sir Henry Clinton, at that time the commander in chief of the British forces in America, protesting just such an incident. They complained that "on Tuesday last the 24th day of November, 1778, A Party of his Majesty's troops on their return from Smith Town came to Huntington and there Plundered several Houses carrying away Butter and the Princable Necessaries of Many families took many fowls [*sic*] Destroyed wheat and carryed off without Paying or giving any Receipts for the Things taken by the said Party." The town officials then asked that "for the future [they] be Protected against Every Act of Injustice."

Another hardship imposed on many homeowners was the forced billeting, or quartering of military personnel, both British and Hessian, in homes and barns. This occurred especially during the winter, when tents could not afford adequate protection to the troops. Commanding officers and their aides were normally comfortably housed in the better residences, as was, for

example, Lieutenant Colonel John Graves Simcoe at the Townsend home in Oyster Bay. Officers and enlisted men received accommodations suitable to their status. Householders who had Hessian troops billeted with them had to contend with a barrier that did not exist for those whose premises were occupied by the British. Few of the German mercenaries spoke English and there were relatively few Long Islanders who spoke German in Queens or Suffolk counties.

Generally speaking, the number of troops assigned to a house depended on the number of fireplaces available. After setting aside a certain number of rooms for the family and at least one fireplace for cooking and heating, the remaining rooms having fireplaces were assigned to soldiers. Wood for the enlisted men's fireplaces had to be furnished by the homeowner, so woodpiles were kept well stocked to prevent occupation forces from taking fences, sheds, or other wooden structures for their cooking and heating needs. Nevertheless, wood fences fell easy prey to those who needed instant fuel, and by the war's end there were few fences left along the roads.



John Glover, an American officer from Massachusetts, commanded the vessels that evacuated American troops from Long Island to Manhattan after the disastrous battle of Long Island. Illustration from Memoirs of the Long Island Historical Society, Volume 3 (1878). Reproduced courtesy of the society.

The military cantonments (camps), which appeared here and there about the countryside, occupied a great deal of what ordinarily would have been arable land. The problems of sanitation and the camp sicknesses that periodically occurred were cause for concern throughout the war. The farmers' nearby fields suffered from wandering feet and liberating hands. Rich meadowlands and grain fields were turned into pastures for the cavalry horses. From the first bugle call in the morning until reveille at night, those who lived near these campgrounds were made aware of the military life around them. It has been said that the great attraction of the day in the vicinity of Hempstead was the parade of the 17th Dragoons on their magnificently trained mounts.

There was a considerable amount of social activity on the island in spite of the war. The wealthier loyalists entertained in their homes with dancing and dinners. In the midst of the grim atmosphere of war, there was a kind of courtly grace to these parties, with the ladies in their satin gowns, powdered hair and the glitter of jewelry, and the men in their brocaded waistcoats, satin breeches, white silk stockings, and well burnished shoes with silver buckles. The ladies danced the quadrille and the various reels with the king's officers, who were dressed in well-fitted wigs, spotless red coats with gold braid, yellow buckskin trousers, and shining black boots. While music flowed from stringed instruments, laughter and good conversation diminished the concerns of war. Love affairs between the younger officers and the daughters of well-to-do Long Island loyalists sometimes led to the grand ceremony of a military wedding. While scarcity and want existed in the homes of the humbler islanders, there was little hint of it among the privileged in their beautiful homes.

Even in such settings, however, the hazards of war were occasionally just outside the door. During a party at the home of Judge Thomas Jones, patriot raiders who had crossed the sound crept up to the doorway, undetected over the music and gaiety inside. Suddenly they opened the door, seized the judge and a friend with whom he was conversing, and sailed with the hostages across the sound to Connecticut. The judge was later exchanged for a patriot held by the British.

The relationships between British commanders and the gen-

eral populace varied according to individuals. Patriot factions still on the island found spokesmen among their clergy. At East Hampton, British commander Sir William Erskine had both respect and admiration for an outspoken patriot minister, Dr. Samuel Buell. The story is told that on one occasion after Erskine had ordered the men of East Hampton to assemble their wagons at Southampton early on the following Sunday morning, Dr. Buell met Sir William and told him that on Sundays he was commander in chief at East Hampton and that he had annulled the order. Erskine avoided further tension by revoking his order.

On the other hand, at Huntington Lieutenant Colonel John Graves Simcoe and the Reverend Ebenezer Prime were two personalities who could not compromise. Tensions between the two finally erupted to the disadvantage of the patriot minister: his house was commandeered, his furniture broken, and many of the books in his library were destroyed. His church was rendered unfit for worship and the elderly minister retired a short distance away, dying in 1779.

The War Continues

On November 19, 1778, Lieutenant Colonel John Graves Simcoe brought to Oyster Bay his regiment of Queen's Rangers, a corps of loyalists recruited for the most part in Connecticut and New York. Simcoe lost no time in fortifying Oyster Bay by the construction of a square redoubt on the summit of a hill that commanded the entire village. Each angle of the fort had a platform on which fieldpieces were mounted. The guardhouse in the center of the fortification was made musketproof and controlled the entire area of the parapets. The outer circuit of the hill was hemmed by sunken flèches or outworks and these were joined by a barricade of felled trees with sharpened branches facing outward. If necessary, the entire corps could have been contained within the fortified area.

Simcoe knew that Oyster Bay was a likely target for any patriot invasion launched from New England across the sound. He made his headquarters at the home of Samuel Townsend, now Raynham Hall, cutting down Townsend's excellent orchard to provide some of the trees to make the fort for his rangers. The colonel enjoyed the company of the Townsend daughters—at least one of whom was a patriot spy. Many British officers were entertained at the Townsend home, including Major John André just before his ill-fated trip to West Point and his rendezvous with Benedict Arnold. Arnold would escape the hangman's rope, but André, caught while wearing a civilian disguise, was executed as a spy.

Perhaps the most forbidding figure to emerge during Long Is-

land's occupation was Colonel Benjamin Thompson, later Count Rumford, who came to Huntington toward the close of the war after hostilities had ceased but before a peace treaty was concluded. He was in command of a regiment called the King's American Dragoons, a loyalist unit that had seen action in the South. Massachusetts born, he died in France after establishing a reputation as a scientist and philanthropist. But on Long Island between 1782 and 1783 he made himself obnoxious. Constructing "Fort Golgotha," a fort entirely unnecessary due to the end of hostilities, he desecrated Huntington's old burying ground by pulling up the tombstones and using them as baking stones. Much of the lumber used to build the fort was obtained by dismantling the Presbyterian church. Tradition has it that Thompson pitched his headquarters tent near the grave of the patriot minister, Ebenezer Prime, so that whenever he went in or out of his tent he could "step on the damned old rebel's head."

While the fortunes of war had forced the patriots to give up Long Island to British occupation, the waters around the island remained a battleground throughout the war. While there were frequent actions between large sailing ships, such as those of the British navy and those of the privateers authorized to seize British vessels, Long Island's waters were particularly active with "whaleboat warfare." In peacetime, these mobile boats carried crews in pursuit of the sea's giant mammals; in war, they carried crews in pursuit of British plunder. About thirty feet in length and pointed at both ends, whaleboats could be handled either by a few oarsmen or in a strong breeze a mast and sail could be raised. Heavy enough to take the pounding of the waves, they were light enough so that they could be carried overland on the crew's shoulders. A swivel gun was sometimes placed in the bow. Whaleboats were ideal for smuggling goods across the sound, or for raiding shoreline depots.

Occasionally the loyalists and British also used whaleboats, but the rebels were the clear masters of whaleboat warfare. Whaleboat guerrillas based in New England crossed the sound and kidnapped prominent loyalists, who were later exchanged for patriots. A little larceny—perhaps a great deal of larceny—made the whaleboats famous in the so-called "London trading" of patriots in New England who were eager to obtain British goods smuggled across the sound, to the profit also of the loyal-

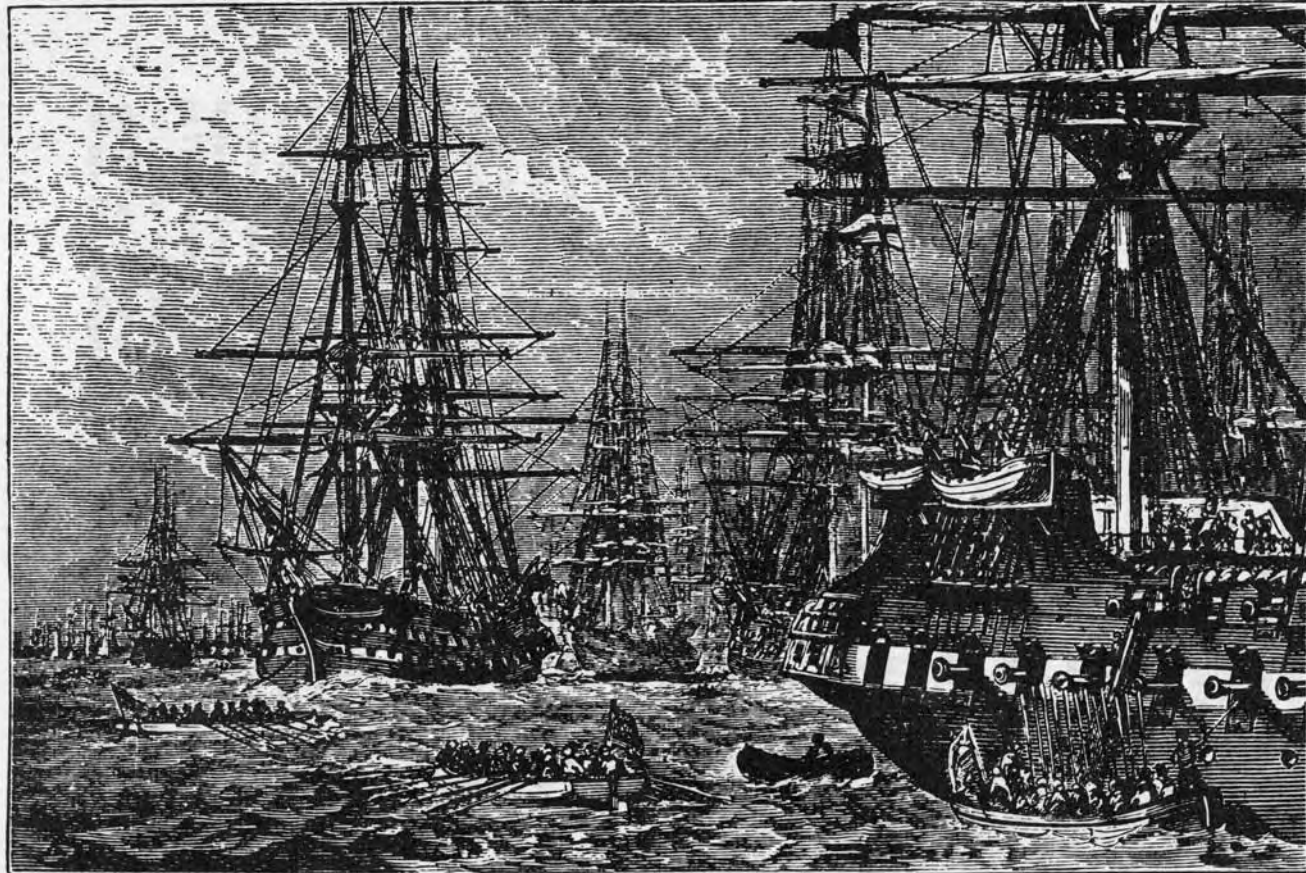
ist or British contact on the island. Dedicated rebels tried to destroy this "London trading" just as surely as they tried to use their whaleboats to disrupt normal British trade.

The whaleboats were especially effective in interrupting the flow of goods to the British stationed in New York City and the eastern end of the island. Plucky rebel crews captured poultry, hay, grain, building timber, firewood, and other commodities the British occupation forces needed. The more daring raiders even entered harbors on dark nights and dismantled smaller British vessels as they rode at anchor, making off with their sails and other equipment. Lurking in the cover of reeds and rushes along the shore, the whaleboats could dart out to attack fleets of small supply vessels.

Whaleboat attacks did not go unchallenged. British warships constantly patrolled the sound. Sometimes crew and whaleboat were captured, but if boats were run aground, crewmen could usually jump ashore and escape into the woods. Loyalist militia units were stationed at intervals along the north shore of the island to warn of any raid or to march quickly to the aid of those already attacked. Beacons, some twenty feet high and others no more than piles of brush, would be set afire whenever raiders appeared. The blaze of these beacons at night or their smoke by day quickly telegraphed the warning up and down the coast.

Patriots as well as loyalists were victimized by whaleboat raiders. The Reverend Samuel Buell of East Hampton complained to Connecticut's Governor Jonathan Trumbull that rebel sympathizers at the eastern end of the island were suffering because raiders from New England were taking what little had been left to them by the British. Years before hostilities were over, whaleboat warfare was in disrepute. By 1779, the wartime activities of seaborne raiders was frequently no more than a cover for outright piracy. Many families, fearing pirates, lived in their farm's outbuildings even in inclement weather rather than remain in their homes and risk a sudden visit by the whaleboat outlaws.

Whaleboats and other vessels played the key role in most of the military engagements along the north shore. From 1777 to 1782, American and British forces crisscrossed the sound, attempting to disrupt each other's war effort by destroying fortifications and supply centers. In May 1777 a whaleboat raid was or-



The British fleet in the lower bay.

Digitized by the New York State Library from the Library's collections.

From Peter Ross's *A History of Long Island, Volume 1* (1902).

ganized as a retaliation for the British devastation of Danbury, Connecticut, the previous month and as a major effort to disrupt British shipping along Long Island's north shore. Under the command of a lieutenant colonel named Return Jonathan Meigs, 170 men boarded whaleboats at Guilford, Connecticut, and crossed the sound under the escort of two armed sloops. Landing at Southold, the raiders carried their boats overland to Peconic Bay where they were launched again. About four miles from Sag Harbor the boats were hidden in a wooded area and the attacking force proceeded on foot. Completely surprising the seventy loyalist defenders of De Lancey's Provincial Corps, the patriots captured the fort. A twelve-gun British schooner in the harbor opened fire upon the raiders, but without result. The raiders destroyed twelve vessels in the harbor as well as vast supplies of hay, corn, oats, rum, and other merchandise designated for army use. A total of ninety prisoners were taken, and Colonel Meigs returned to Connecticut without a single casualty, having carried out the raid and traveled nearly 100 miles in just eighteen hours. The Continental Congress was so impressed that Meigs was awarded "an elegant sword."

A second rebel assault on Long Island came in August of that same year. Its target was a fortified Presbyterian church, surrounded by breastworks, at Setauket. The earthen walls around the church, six feet high and five feet thick, had been topped by picket logs six feet high, which had been set close together with just enough space between them for men to fire muskets at attackers. Swivel guns had been placed in the upper windows of the church. Colonel Richard Hewlett commanded 250 loyalist defenders, many of whom lodged in the nearby town when not on duty.

Patriot General Israel Putnam ordered General Samuel Parsons to attack the position and either destroy or carry away the military stores there. About 500 rebels embarked in whaleboats, and a single sloop crossed the sound from Black Rock, Connecticut, and landed at Crane Neck Bend, approximately three miles from Setauket. In spite of precautions, the patriot forces were detected. An express rider already had been sent for reinforcements. The raiders demanded the fort's surrender, but the loyalists declared that they would fight to the end. The patriots opened fire on the church with a six-pound cannon; the loyal-

ists' swivel guns answered. After two or three hours, the rebels called off their attack; they had learned that reinforcements were rushing to the aid of the beleaguered garrison and several British ships had been sighted coming along the sound to cut off the retreat to Connecticut. A few military stores were destroyed as the patriots beat a hasty retreat, but the raid had been a failure.

A third expedition that year was launched in December. The attack was planned as a three-pronged assault: General Parsons was to cross to Southold where he would destroy timber gathered for the British army barracks in New York City; Colonel Meigs was to strike from what is now Port Chester into enemy strongholds at Hempstead and Jamaica; and the third unit under Colonel Samuel Webb was to land at Huntington and support either or both of the other patriot forces as required. General Parsons and his men crossed the sound in whaleboats, destroying the timber and taking some prisoners. Colonel Meigs, however, was unable to launch his force because of high seas. Colonel Webb got across the sound, but was then intercepted by a British sloop, and many members of his force, including himself and Colonel John Ely, were captured.

In July 1779 a major British effort was directed against Connecticut to punish the inhabitants there for supporting whaleboat warfare and for supplying the Continental army. Embarking on forty-eight vessels at Whitestone, about 2,600 troops were carried up the sound to New Haven Bay. On July 5 they landed and, facing little opposition, occupied and plundered New Haven. During the next week the British forces continued their destruction, burning Fairfield, Green's Farms, and Norwalk. The expedition inflamed rather than diminished patriot passions; in the fall they struck back.

When autumn came, a native Long Islander, Major Benjamin Tallmadge of the Second Continental Dragoons, was summoned from his command in the Hudson Highlands. Tallmadge was the son of the Presbyterian minister at Setauket and had a detailed firsthand knowledge of the island's terrain. He was ordered to plan and lead a series of expeditions across the sound. The major's first assault on the island came on September 5, 1779, when early in the evening he and 130 of his Light Dragoons left their horses in Stamford, Connecticut, and crossed

over to make a surprise attack on Lloyd's Neck. There, loyalist woodcutters, based at a small stockade, had been busy working for the British. Tallmadge and his men made no attempt to storm the stockade but instead swept up 500 loyalist prisoners and escaped across the sound without a single loss.

A year later, in 1780, Tallmadge undertook a much greater assignment. A group of Rhode Island loyalists had fled their own colony and taken refuge in a base they established around a manor house owned by General John Smith, a great-grandson of the original manor lord, "Tangier" Smith. Located on Smith's Point in Mastic on the south shore of the island, the base was protected by an improvised triangular fort consisting of three stockaded walls, twelve feet high, which connected three strongholds: the manor house, another fortified house, and a small fort. Named Fort St. George, it was near a little harbor where supplies were loaded to be shipped to Manhattan.

Major Tallmadge crossed the sound from Connecticut and, in disguise, visited the stockade. Recrossing the water, he planned his attack. On November 21, 1780, he sailed across the sound again, this time accompanied by eighty of his dragoons in eight whaleboats. Arriving about nine o'clock in the evening, Tallmadge left twenty of his men to watch the boats and with the others began a march across the island toward the south shore. Suddenly a storm erupted. Tallmadge realized that even if his attack was successful, his men could not escape across the sound in such severe wind and rain.

Returning to his boats, he and his men hid until the skies calmed the next evening. Setting off again, the raiders reached the triangular fort and at dawn on November 23 moved to the attack. In order to avoid warning a sentry by the accidental discharge of a musket, Tallmadge ordered his men to make a bayonet charge with unloaded muskets. Moving simultaneously toward all three sides of the fort, the attackers broke through one stockade and scaled the other two, shouting, "Washington and Glory!" Within ten minutes, the manor house was captured. Firing still came from the upper windows of the other house, but it was quickly silenced and the entire fort occupied. Tallmadge's men demolished the fort and burned the small vessels at the wharf. On the way back to their whaleboats, a small number of men were dispatched to Coram where a large quan-

tity of hay destined for New York was burned. The major, with about 300 prisoners (mostly noncombatants), returned across the sound to Fairfield, his only casualty being one man wounded.

The last major raid on Long Island was launched partly in retaliation for a devastating British expedition in September 1781 from New York City against New London and Groton, Connecticut. Led by the turncoat Benedict Arnold, the expedition incensed patriots, because Arnold's troops had massacred more than seventy soldiers who had surrendered after a brisk battle for a local post, Fort Griswold. Revenge for this deed would fall upon loyalist woodcutters working at Treadwell's Neck, east of Lloyd's Neck near Smithtown. The workers had erected a square stockaded fort surrounded by a ditch and an abatis—trees and branches were felled to face the enemy. The loyalists had named it Fort Slongo in honor of a British officer. Rebel Major Lemuel Trescott crossed the sound on October 10, 1781, with a detachment of 150 troops and took the fort without losing a man.



Benjamin Tallmadge, a native Long Islander, led several successful raids from Connecticut against the British on Long Island. He also organized and directed one of the most successful spy networks operating in occupied New York. This engraving was made from a pencil sketch by the well-known artist John Trumbull. Photo courtesy of the New York State Library, Albany.

While patriots crossed the sound from New England to raid Long Island, loyalists used the island to strike in the other direction. To give their activities legal sanction so that their forces would not be branded as pirates or outlaws, the "Associated Loyalists" were authorized in November 1780 to fight for the king under their own leaders often using boats they purchased themselves. Their primary objective was to harass the seacoast of New England and to interrupt trade in much the same way as the rebel whaleboats. An important base at Lloyd's Neck was put at their disposal by the British.

In March 1781, a schooner belonging to the Association had a spirited engagement with whaleboats from Connecticut, but neither side emerged victorious. In April the loyalists successfully attacked a fort near New Haven where they captured the garrison. But one of their boats was also captured, and some of the prisoners were sent to the notorious patriot catacomb prison in Connecticut, the Simsbury Mines. In June, a detachment of forty Associated Loyalists made a successful raid into Connecticut, penetrating three miles into the countryside and carrying off seven prisoners and a number of horses and cattle, with the loss of only one man. Again, in August, a party of loyalists raided Connecticut. They were so troublesome that three frigates and 250 troops of the French admiral the Count de Barras assaulted their base at Lloyd's Neck, named Fort Franklin in honor of Benjamin Franklin's loyalist son William, who had helped found their organization. The French assault failed. Then in 1782 the operations of the Associated Loyalists were curtailed after a prisoner of war was hanged in New Jersey by one of their units.

Long Island's waters were not always battlegrounds. Wallabout Bay, at the western end of the island, held several unseaworthy vessels which served as prisons. Nothing in the annals of the Revolution surpasses the sheer tragedy of the prisoners confined on these ships. Most inmates were captured soldiers or sailors, but some were political prisoners, a few of whom had been sent to the ships without hearings or trials. Of all the prison ships, the *Jersey* was the most notorious and the deadliest. Thousands died there. The *Jersey* had originally been a sixty-four-gun ship of the line, but at the time of the Revolution was in such a decayed state that she had to be dismantled and

put in service as a prison. There were at least a dozen other ships serving in the same capacity in the New York City area. Two of these were at Wallabout Bay with the *Jersey*—the *Hunter* and the *Stromboli*. On the *Jersey*, 1,000 or more prisoners were jammed together in the spaces below deck. With little light, heat, and fresh air, the prisoners became the victims of smallpox, dysentery, yellow fever, and other diseases. Rations were poor and scant, sometimes uncooked, sometimes spoiled. Water rations were often polluted.

How many died during this continuing horror will never be known with certainty. Estimates vary widely on the total number of prison deaths in the Revolution, with the figure 8,500 being adopted as “conservative” in a recent study of Revolutionary War casualties. Since the bulk of the prisoners were held in New York, it is certain that thousands must have died on the ships alone. It is even possible that more died in New York prisons than on all the battlefields of the Revolution. Those fortunate enough to be released during the war or those who survived to be released after the peace often died later of tuberculosis or other diseases caught on the ships.

One of the most intriguing aspects of the war on Long Island was the organization and successful operation of a superb patriot espionage unit. The guiding light of the project was the same Major Benjamin Tallmadge (later a colonel) who had led several forays from Connecticut across the sound. In 1778 he became chief of intelligence for General Washington. Tallmadge, a native of Setauket in Suffolk County, recruited as his chief operatives Robert Townsend from Oyster Bay, who posed as a loyalist merchant in New York City; Austin Roe, a tavern-keeper and merchant from Setauket; Abraham Woodhull, a Setauket farmer; and Caleb Brewster, a Setauket whaler turned whaleboat raider. Robert Townsend was especially effective in New York City, where he made the acquaintance of officers and others who unintentionally provided him with important information about British troop movements. Townsend sometimes transmitted his reports verbally, and other times used invisible ink on sheets of paper concealed in bundles of merchandise sent directly to Abraham Woodhull. Austin Roe acted as courier, covering the more than fifty miles between Setauket and New York. Roe utilized his position as a merchant to go to the city



Robert Townsend and his sister Sally Townsend were two active members of the intelligence system known as the Culper Ring established by Washington in 1778. Photographs courtesy of Raynham Hall, Oyster Bay.



regularly—sometimes more than once a week—to order and pick up goods for his customers. Once Roe had delivered Townsend's messages to Woodhull, Woodhull would wait for Caleb Brewster to come across the sound from Connecticut.

Brewster's arrival would be signaled by Nancy Strong, the wife of Judge Selah Strong of Setauket, who would hang certain clothes in a prearranged pattern on her clothesline. Woodhull, waiting directly across a small body of water from her home, would thereby learn exactly where Brewster had landed. Once Brewster had received the intelligence reports from Woodhull, he would recross the sound and turn them over to Tallmadge, who in turn sped them on their way to Washington. The spy ring used both number codes and names as covers: thus Tallmadge was known as John Bolton, 721; Woodhull was Samuel Culper, 722; Townsend as Samuel Culper, Jr., 723; Roe, 724; and Brewster, 725.

As the war continued year after year, few Long Island residents were able to remain neutral. The Quakers particularly suffered because their conscientious pacifism dictated that they could not aid either side. As late as 1782, a Quaker schoolhouse

was torn down by British soldiers "apparently because of objections to the Friends' principles." The possessions of Quakers were frequently seized because they refused to contribute to the war effort of either side. Following a long tradition of raising funds for peace in times of war, the Quakers in the Revolution established a subscription of monies to be used "to the relief of the indigent and [to] afford comfort to the distressed."

Not all Quakers could remain neutral in fact, however, and those who were found by their Quaker neighbors to be sympathetic to one side or the other or who were found in company with military personnel were chastised. Nevertheless, one Quaker recorded sadly that "some Friends have so far deviated from our discipline as to cart various articles for the use of the army, which matter coming weightedly under our consideration, it appears to us that if some Friends do these things it will have a tendency to increase the suffering of such who for conscience sake can not comply therewith, and it is our judgement that doing such things is inconsistent with our testimony against war and that such who are in that practice ought to be dealt with as other offenders."

Epilogue: Peace Returns

Finally the long travail of war came to an end for all the people of Long Island and America. The Treaty of Paris, which formally ended the war, was signed on September 3, 1783, but the combatants had learned that peace was coming long before that date. Hostilities flickered out like a tired candle, with a gradual reduction of British and American military activities marked by unmistakable signs. In April 1783 upwards of 200 "excellent dragoon horses in high condition" were auctioned at Brooklyn, Jamaica, Hempstead Plains, and Huntington. More horses were sold at Jamaica in July. In August, draft and saddle horses, carts, wagons, harnesses, and other gear went on sale at a wagon yard in Brooklyn. Throughout the summer a board of British officers investigated and settled many claims of citizens who had supplied the British army. In September, the board ceased its activity, much to the dismay of many who still had accounts to settle.

The loyalist plight had been one of desperation since news of Yorktown in 1781. A few prepared to join those loyalists who had fled to England during the war, but most of those who decided to leave their Long Island homes headed for Canada where the British government had granted them land, much of it in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. Other Long Island loyalists decided to remain where they were. But for all those loyal to George III, the world had been turned upside down.

Even after George Washington and his army took possession of New York City on November 25, British forces still occupied

certain areas of Staten Island, Kings, and Queens. On December 4, they too took final leave of America. The end of British occupation in Flushing was typical. In the morning there were thousands of troops there, but by late afternoon every last one was gone. A storekeeper in Jamaica recalled, "One day the British patrolled the streets, next day the American soldiers."

Patriot celebrations at the end of the long war were joyous. At Brunswick on December 2, the American flag was hoisted to the firing of salutes, and an ox was roasted to provide a feast for all. It was said that the day "was spent in the greatest good humor, decency and decorum." At Jamaica on December 8, the new flag was displayed on a liberty pole, and in the afternoon a parade with music marched through the village, the participants saluting the stars and stripes as they passed by. In the evening, a newspaper reported, "every house in the village, and several miles around, was most brilliantly illuminated, and a ball given to the ladies concluded the whole. It was pleasing to view the different expressions of joy and gratitude apparent in every countenance upon the occasion. In short, the whole was conducted with the greatest harmony, and gave universal satisfaction." Out in Suffolk, at Setauket, they too roasted a whole ox and had a daylong celebration. The great event of that day was the appearance of the native son who had done so much for the American cause, Colonel Benjamin Tallmadge, who acted as master of ceremonies.

The ravages of war were over and it was a time for rebuilding. For the men and women who lived through the long ordeal, it would take a long time before their bitter memories were erased. Fortunately, it was an ordeal not repeated.

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Abraham Yates Jr. and the New Political Order in Revolutionary New York by Stefan Bielinski

The Champlain Valley in the American Revolution by Edward P. Hamilton (Published jointly with Champlain Valley Committee for the Observance of the Bicentennial of the American Revolution)

Four Traditions: Women of New York During the American Revolution by Linda Grant De Pauw

The Hudson Valley in the American Revolution by Robert W. Venables

Longhouse Diplomacy and Frontier Warfare: The Iroquois Confederacy in the American Revolution by William T. Hagan

New York's Signers of the Declaration of Independence by Paul Scudiere

The Spirit of '76 by Carl Becker, edited and with an Introduction by Louis L. Tucker

Garrison Town: The British Occupation of New York City 1776-1783 by William A. Polf

Reprints of New York State
Education Department Publications

The Black Minority in Early New York by David Kobrin

John Jay, 1745-1829 by Herbert Alan Johnson

Sir William Johnson and the Indians of New York by Milton W. Hamilton

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